

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

[Volume 7]

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSITUTION OF GUYANA**

83rd Sitting

2 p.m.

Friday, 5th December, 1975

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

Cde. Sase Narain, J.P., Speaker

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (50)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C., **(Absent)**
Prime Minister

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P.A. Reid, **(Absent)**
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development

Senior Ministers (9)

Cde.H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Economic Development

* Cde. H. Greene, **(Absent)**
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

***Non-elected Minister**

* Cde. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

* F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

* Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A., **(Absent)**
Minister of Works and Housing

* Cde. G.A. King, **(Absent)**
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

* Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H., **(Absent)**
Minister of Agriculture

* Cde. C.L. Baird, **(Absent)**
Minister of Education and Social Development

* Cde. F.R. Willis S.C., **(Absent)**
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice

Ministers (5)

Cde. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture

Cde. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and leader of the House

*Cde. O.M.R. Harper, **(Absent)**
Minister of Health

*Cde. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs

Ministers of State (9)

Cde. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

***Non-elected Ministers**

Cde. O.E. Clarke,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Berbice/Corentyne)

Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)

(Absent)

Cde. C.A. Nascimento,
Minister of State,
Office of the Prime Minister

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)

(Absent)

Cde. K.B. Bancroft,
Minister of State - Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro)

(Absent)

*Cde. W. Haynes,
Minister of State for Consumer Protection

(Absent – on leave)

*Cde. A. Salim,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)

(Absent)

*Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael,
Minister of State – Regional (North West)

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

Cde. J.R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of National Development

Cde. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Housing

Cde. M.M. Ackman,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Office of the Prime Minister and Government Chief Whip

***Non-elected Ministers**

Cde. E.L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. S. Prashad,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education and Social Development

(Absent – on leave)

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Office of the Prime Minister

(Absent)

Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Housing

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman, Deputy Speaker

Other Members (16)

Cde. J.N. Aaron

Cde. L.M. Branco

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler

Cde. J. Gill

Cde. W. Hussain

Cde. S. Jaiserrisingh

Cde. K.M.E. Jonas

Cde. M. Nissar

Cde. L.E. Ramsahoye

Cde. J.G. Ramson

Cde. P.A. Rayman

Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.

Cde. C. Sukul, J.P.

Cde. H.A. Taylor

Cde. L.E. Willems

(Absent – on leave)

(Absent – on leave)

Members of the Opposition – Liberator Party (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, Leader of the Opposition

Mrs. E. DaSilva

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – F.A. Narine

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – M.B. Henry, AMBIM

PRAYERS**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Economic Development.

The Minister of Economic Development (Cde. Hoyte): On Wednesday, 3rd December, 1975, during the course of the consideration of the Estimates in the Committee of Supply, the hon. Leader of the Opposition alleged that private bookstores were selling text books at prices lower than those which obtained at the Guyana National Trading Corporation (GNTC). The inference was that G.N.T.C was applying a higher mark-up on books than that applied by private bookstores. The Cde. Prime Minister, who at the time was replying to questions relating to one of his Ministries, firmly and categorically rejected such an inference.

On Thursday, 4th December, 1975, while the Committee of Supply was considering the Estimates for the Ministry of Education, the hon. Leader of the Opposition raised the issue again and presented two copies of a textbook entitled "New Mental Arithmetic" by John Duncan and Helen B. Cline, published by Collins. He claimed that one book was bought from the Central Bookstore Ltd. And cost \$2.60 and that the other was bought from the G.N.T.C. and cost \$3.30. He presented two bills in support of his contention.

I subsequently intervened in the debate and while expressing the belief that the hon. Leader of the Opposition was not actuated by any ulterior motive, pointed out that the price comparison was both fallacious and misleading unless it was established that the two books were bought from the publishers around the same time. I further pointed out that because of rampant inflation in the U.K. from which most textbooks were imported, there was a rapid and continuous escalation in the cost of books.

A subsequent examination of the books proved that the book which was bought from the Central Bookstore Ltd. was in fact the 5th impression (1972) and the book bought from the

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G.N.T.C. was the 6th impression (1973). It was clear, therefore, that it was wholly unfair and unrealistic to compare the retail prices of the two books. Obviously, the cost of the two books could not be the same. Hon. Members would be able to gauge the rate of escalation in the price of books when I disclose that the U.K. publishing house, Collins, recently informed G.N.T.C. by cable that the 1976 impression of the text book, "The Geography of Guyana", would cost about \$5.00 as against \$2.85 in 1975 – an increase of some 75 per cent.

I wish to say, however, that when the fact of different publication dates of the two books was brought to the attention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he was gracious enough to concede that had his attention been attracted to this matter before, he would not have raised the issue in the House. I am grateful to him for this assurance and I think that it is only right and proper that it should be publicly known.

In passing, I should explain – although I do not consider the point to be one of great importance – that the particular textbook in question was not imported by G.N.T.C., but in fact, formed part of the stock of a private bookstore (R.B. George) which went out of business and whose stock of textbooks was taken over by G.N.T.C.

2.10 p.m.

The selling price reflects the price at which the books were taken over – a price which I am advised was a fair one, having regard to actual costs.

However, because of the publicity which has attended this issue, I consider it necessary to make a public statement on the pricing policies of G.N.T.C. with respect to textbooks and also with respect to actual prices of books sold by the Corporation. On 1st January, 1975, Government became the sole importer of basic textbooks approved for use in schools by the Ministry of Education; and since July, 1975, Government has become the sole importer of books. The Government agency which has responsibility for such importation is G.N.T.C. Government's

action was inspired by a desire to stabilise the price of textbooks, to bring to an end the exploitation of students resulting from excessive mark-ups on textbooks and to ensure the adequate supply of these books as far as possible. It should be noted, for example, that as a result of Government's policy, the price of a textbook is the same throughout the country, whether that book is sold in Georgetown, Corriverton, Mabaruma or Lethem.

The pricing policy of G.N.T.C. is not designed to make excessive profits, but to ensure these basic textbooks reach students at the lowest possible cost. Thus, the generous discounts which G.N.T.C. obtains from the publishers because of the volume of its purchases are passed on to the buyer and, moreover, G.N.T.C.'s relatively small mark-up is based upon actual cost. It is right to say that (given the same importation dates) no private book store would have been in a position to see any of these textbooks at a price as low as that at which the G.N.T.C. sells. In many cases, G.N.T.C.'s prices are the same as the publishers' catalogue prices. In many cases, too, G.N.T.C.'s prices are significantly lower than those of private bookstores in respect of books imported by these stores prior to 1975 at the lower prices prevailing at the time of importation.

I am in a position to provide this honourable House with irrefutable evidence in support of this statement. On the 2nd December, 1975, the Argosy Bookstore Ltd., for example, sent a list of books with the relevant wholesale prices to G.N.T.C. in support of a request that G.N.T.C. should take over its stock of basic text books. It should be noted first of all that these books were imported prior to 1975 and, secondly, that the prices at which they were offered to G.N.T.C. were wholesale prices. It is therefore instructive to compare the private bookstore's wholesale prices for some of these books (old stock) with the retail prices prevailing at G.N.T.C. for 1975 importations: I will name some of the books and will show what the private bookstores were offering these books at wholesale as against what the retail prices were at G.N.T.C.

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Name of Book	Private Bookstore's Wholesale Price	GNTC Retail Price
People who Came (Book I)	\$4.90	4.45
(Book II)	5.50	5.25
Physical Geography in Diagrams	5.50	5.25
Making of Guyana	7.15	6.85
History of the West Indies		
People (Book 4)	5.25	5.25
Modern Maths (Book 3)	13.15	10.30

This is merely a random selection, but it shows the general pattern. I wish to say that I have not selected this particular bookshop in order to criticise it or hold it up to ridicule. Indeed, there are other bookshops which have made similar offers and in respect of which a similar pattern of prices reveals itself. I merely wish to emphasise the point that, having regard to pricing policies, no private bookstore in this country is in a position to see textbooks at a price cheaper than those prevailing at G.N.T.C., relative to publishers' prices.

It is my hope, Cde. Speaker, that my statement has put this matter in proper perspective, once and for all, and that we will now devote our energies, as a nation, not to disputations about the price of textbooks, but to creating a socialist system in which, among other things, our children will have a guarantee of free textbooks and free education generally.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Singh): I am involved in this, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You cannot reply to the Minister's Statement.

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2.10 -2.20 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1976

BUDGET DEBATE

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the estimates of expenditure for the financial year 1976, totally \$552,203,022.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

The Chairman: We will proceed with the Head, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, pages 86 to 90.

HEAD 31 – MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Question proposed that the sum of \$12,057,160 for Head 31, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak generally on vacancies in this Ministry and then to speak on just a few items on page 90. Subhead 15 and subhead 27: I will speak generally on vacancies starting on page 86.

This is undoubtedly an important Ministry. Indeed, most of the Ministries in the Government are important. There are some that I do not accept and I have said that in this honourable House before but certainly this is an important Ministry in this Government. To my mind it is a very important Ministry manned by a senior Minister and as such one would like to know that at least most of the posts are filled. We do appreciate the realities of life and we cannot

expect that all would be filled all the time. But at least most should be filled most of the time because obviously a post not being filled will necessarily reflect on the efficiency of the department. I see underspending in that certain sums of money were provided in the Approved Estimates for Personal Emoluments and the Revised Estimates show smaller amount. Whenever there is underspending I form the impression that there are vacancies.

In this respect if we looked at item (11) Stock Verifiers, we would see that there has been underspending. I shall not quote the figures because I do not think it necessary to quote figures in all cases of underspending. Also item (12), Senior Clerks and just to give an example in the case of item (20), Assistant Utilisation Officer, \$3,936 was voted for that post and only \$984 is put down in the Revised Estimates.

There has been an underspending in respect of the four posts shown at item (22), Senior Forest Inspector.

The same thing applies to item (29), forest Technical assistant II; item (31), Assistant Draughtsman; item (35), Store Keeper III; item (39), Cabinet Maker Foreman, on page 87. The Cabinet Maker Foreman requires some expertise but certainly not as much as some of the others.

Item (41), Deputy Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines: I wonder whether this post has been filled. The vote has been underspent.

I can list others: Item (42), Chief Geologist; item (46), Geophysicist; item (47), Geologist and Assistant Geologists. There are supposed to be 14 of these. Item (60), Scientific Assistants. The amount voted was \$12,984. That has been revised to \$5,760; item (62), Geological Technical Assistant I; item (63), Laboratory Assistants I; item (68) on page 88, Librarian IV; item (75), Assistant Chief Engineer.

There has been underspending in the listed posts from (77) to (79) – Mechanical Engineer, Senior Electrical Engineer and 5 posts of Senior Engineer (Civil). For example, if we look at the post Senior Engineer (Civil), the vote of \$46,140 has been revised to only \$11,535.

That goes on to the Posts of Draughtsman in item (83). All the posts of Draughtsman seem to have been underspending. The Approved Estimate shows \$25,236. That has been revised to \$7,980 and the same thing happens in item (84), Engineering Technicians.

It goes on in that vein. However, the information I would like from the hon. Minister is what plans his Ministry has to remedy this situation. We do know that there are certain skills required and in respect of some of these posts, certain expertise, but until the Ministry revises them all they cannot perform 100 per cent efficiently. It is important that every effort be made to fill these posts at the earliest opportunity. Is the Ministry involved in some sort of particular training in this respect? So much for vacancies.

Turning to page 90, subhead 15, Silviculture: We know that the amount spent in 1974 was \$18,100. The amount voted in 1975 shown in the Approved Estimates was \$70,000, as the Ministry is telling us in the Revised Estimates Column that it proposes to spend all of that \$70,000. The revised figure is \$70,000 and the request is being made for \$77,000 for 1976. Will the hon. Minister tell us if this scheme is progressing satisfactorily? Some time ago it had got off the ground. Will we really spend this \$70,000 in 1975? In the past we never seemed to have spent the full amount provided. Or it may be that the scheme has now firmly got off the ground. Would the hon. Minister give us the details?

Subhead 27 deals with Expenses of Petroleum Unit. I wonder whether this has to do with oil exploration. Within recent times one has not been hearing very much about oil exploration. We did hear a lot about it at one time, for instance, that licence had been granted for the oil drilling operations that were taking place. I would like the hon. Minister to tell us what is happening in this field, whether work is, in fact, going on and what prospects there are. I do not

ask him to tell me tales out of school but we would like to know what prospects we have of finding oil in Guyana. We note that the sum of \$30,000 is being requested for expenditure in 1976.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Cde. Jack): Thank you Cde. Chairman. With regard to the question of vacancies one will recall that starting from 1974, we had to take a very hard look at the question of staffing, having regard to certain constraints which had been imposed on us by the economic situation. Many of the posts mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition are of the nature of specialist posts or posts which require special skills. I do not know if it is readily appreciated but, due to the correctness of Government's policy and to the economic advancement which we have been making in recent months, there is quite a shortage of people with technical skills in this country at the moment.

I would like to say that it is important to note that there are sufficient projects in operation at present time to allow for any person who has a skill to be employed. In these circumstances we have been making efforts to fill the various posts. About three months ago the Ministry did some in-depth investigation into the whole question of re-staffing of the Ministry. Efforts are proceeding apace to bring the strength of the Ministry up to what it was and I can assure the hon. Member that during the course of 1976 we shall be pursuing efforts to fill the various posts.

I take the point that he is making with regard to filling of vacancies particularly those relating to persons with special skills.

I turn now to the question of Silviculture. We have over 1,000 acres under cultivation and exploration is proceeding apace with regard to the utilisation of the various species of our forest and also with regard to that will be the best species to be used once we start felling.

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(Cde. Jack continues)

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2.30 -2.40 p.m.

2.30 p.m.

The increase which has been noted has been occasioned, among other things, by the general increase in wages and I can assure the hon. Member that every cent of the provision will be spent in 1976.

With regard to the Petroleum Unit, I wish to say that during last August, we sent a two-man team from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources to Nigeria to look at the way in which Nigerians organised their petroleum industry. That team has since returned and submitted a report. We have already established in the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources a Petroleum Unit which is going to be expanded and while this Unit is in operation plans will be made for setting up during 1976 a Petroleum Corporation.

We have found that the policy which was pursued in the past, that is the policy merely of giving out concessions to companies, has not been the most beneficial. In August next what we are proposing to do is this: we will.... to the off-shore areas and the.... where oil may be found. We propose to have a comprehensive survey done so that we can then allocate to individual exploration companies specific areas on terms drawn up between us. At the same time, we will be in control of the interest which will be retained. We propose to do this in 1976.

With regard to the present stage of expansion during this year the Shell Petroleum Company dug two wells in one of which there were showings of oil and gas, but that particular well did not reveal oil in commercial quantity. I have been assured by the geologists that there is oil off-shore in Guyana but the question remains whether there is oil in commercial quantities. We expect that earlier in the next year another company will be drilling.

At the moment we are awaiting their drilling programme and if the programme is set up satisfactory, permission will be granted for them to continue their operations and we would expect that there will be drilling next year. I think that would cover the answers to the questions

my hon. Friend is willing to hear. Certainly we have not abandoned oil exploration in this country.

Head 31, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, \$12,057,160, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 90 (A).

DIVISION XIX – MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Question proposed that the sum of \$27,490,000 for Division XIX, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: I propose speaking on subheads 10,11 and 22. Subhead 10, Canada/Guyana geophysical Survey, the sum being requested for 1976 is \$500,000 and the legend states “To provide for the aeromagnetic survey of the Pakaraimas and the southern part of Guyana.” While we have absolutely no objections to the sum being voted, we should know that in 1975 the Approved Estimate provided \$1,200,000 for this survey but in the revised Estimate nothing is reflected so that it would appear as though nothing was done or nothing will be done in 1975. At least from these estimates one would get the impression, the programme which in the Ministry’s opinion would have utilised \$1,200,000 in 1975 utilised nothing at all, but they expect it would be utilised next year hon. Minister not \$1,200,000 but \$500,000. These obviously must be problems. Will the hon. Minister tell us what the position is?

Subhead 11, Assistance to Miners: We have no objection to the amount being requested which is \$200,000 for 1976 and we note that \$300,000 was the Approved Estimate in 1975 and the revised amount is the same, \$300,000 thereby indicating that the entire sum is being utilised for 1975. Would the hon. Minister tell us how this scheme is operating? Is he satisfied with the operation of this scheme?

In respect of subhead 22, dealing with Capital Contribution to Upper Mazaruni Development Authority, the sum of \$10 million is being requested and the legend states “To provide additional capital for the Authority.” We have heard and we have read something about this Upper Mazaruni Development Authority and since this Ministry is supplying the monies, will the hon. Minister give us a progress report in respect of this Upper Mazaruni Development Authority?

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Jack: Cde. Chairman, first of all, with regard to the Geophysical Aeromagnetic Survey, it is true that money was not spent this year. We have had some difficulties in the Department of Geological Surveys and Mines as a result of the resignation of three of our top geologists who have gone to take up resident in Canada.

2.40 p.m.

It has been a regrettable circumstance that quite a number of our engineers and geologists who have been trained in Canada have either stayed in Canada to take jobs or have returned to Canada where they are attracted by what they may consider more lucrative salaries. But, I think the host countries in general, that is, countries that give scholarships to students from developing countries, should recognise the moral obligation to see that after the recipient country, that is the developing country, has asked them for what is supposed to be the aim, they do not treat it merely as an advance to get some of our talents. All of these people were trained in Canada and, as I say, they returned to Canada. As a result of that, the scheme which was put forward by the first Head of Department was subsequently changed by the second Head of Department who himself left and it is now in the process of being re-organised for us to get this scheme off the ground.

Some people may sneer and some may even snigger but the question of a brain drain is not something peculiar to Guyana. It has the wide implications and as I said before, it should be the case that countries giving scholarships to students from developing countries should not seek to lure those same students to appointment in the country because, as is well-known, it is only the best of our students that they want in any case and those are usually the students on which we have spent the most time, money and effort. However, we expect in 1976 to be able to get on with this programme.

May I say that the whole of Guyana with the exception of the two places mentioned, that is, the Pakaraimas and the southern part of Guyana, have already been covered by aeromagnetic surveys. We have also covered a large part of Guyana by the future graphic surveys. And this aeromagnetic survey is required for us to be able to identify possible sources of minerals. For instance, there is a belief that in the southern part of Guyana we may have extensive deposits of iron ore. It is for this reason that we think it necessary to complete the aeromagnetic surveys.

With regard to the Assistance to Miners, subhead 11, as this House would know, the Assistance to Miners operations is not regularised and comes under the control of an Act. Gold production has been increasing over the years steadily and it is quite clear that the assistance which Government has given to the miners has been a boon to them in that it has helped the people who have for long been neglected in the interior to get upon their feet. Some of the miners have been in a position to repay advances given to them. I think at this stage it is only fair to say that there have been occasions in which miners who have been able to win gold or diamonds from the soil as a result of this assistance to miners' scheme have not responded to their obligation to repay and the Ministry is taking steps to remedy this situation. We have also instituted, as a administrative measure, provisions which require some degree of surety or guarantee by three persons at a time when the loans are being granted but, all in all, we are satisfied that the Assistance to Miners programme is proceeding satisfactorily.

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2.40 -2.50 p.m.

The provision for the Upper Mazaruni Development Authority, subhead 22, relates largely to the work which is being done by the firm of consultants which we have engaged, the firm of SWECO, and this consists in further updating the feasibility study which we have, the completing of which will be ready by February or March, identifying the township for the necessary geological work and starting the plans for the erection of the dam. We expect that this hydro electric scheme should be on stream between 1981 and 1982 and we are making all plans in this direction.

I wish to bring to the attention of this House, something which I believe, because of its very magnitude, is not fully appreciated and that is the amount of capital involved in the erection of the hydro electric scheme; it is something in the region of \$400 million (U.S.). The amount of capital which we have involved in the ancillary scheme which must go along with this hydro electric station, that is an aluminum smelter, is such that there will be an invasion, as it were, of new blood into the economy of Guyana once these schemes get off the ground. There will be an increase in employment in every single category of occupation or profession, even including that of the law, and I am sure that most Guyanese will look forward anxiously and eagerly to the type of economic upsurge that will take place as a result of these schemes. Not only that, Cde. Chairman, but I can assure this House that with the implementation of these schemes there will be a qualitative transformation in the economic life of this country.

2.50 p.m.

Division XIX, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources - \$27,490,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 186 and 187.

HEAD 76, MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,117,264 for Head 76, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, stand part of the Estimates.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Chairman, on page 186, subhead 1, items (21) and (22); on page 187, items (28) and (35), subheads 9 and 19.

2.50 p.m.

Page 186, subhead 1, item (21) Economist and item (22), Job Analyst: I will take these two items together. On the next page I will deal with item (28), Field Investigators, because the same principle applies there. Without going into the quoted figures, it shows that there is only one Economist, there is only one Job Analyst and there should be no vacancies in these sections of the Ministry this year. Why I say this is because last year the Minister told us they were advertising and they had every hope that the posts would be filled. Could the Minister tell us what special problems exist because it seems to be very difficult to fill these three posts. He said that the advertised so we want to know if something is going to happen in 1976.

Page 187, item (35), Charwomen: There are some questions we ask each year at Estimate time hoping for an answer. The question I am going to ask has nothing to do with the amount of money but it is merely to ask the hon. Minister once again if the Campbell report on domestic workers in Guyana will ever see the light of day. Will it ever come to Parliament? We had a long wait for the Irving Report but this Campbell report seems to have been put at the back of the furthest cupboard and does not want to come out. Could the Minister tell us when it will be laid in Parliament?

Subhead 9, Contribution to the International Labour Organisation: For this subhead we are asked to vote \$65,000. We know that \$65,000 is very well spent and it is quite in order. I am

using this opportunity, as it deals with the International Labour Organisation, to remind the hon. Minister of the obligations we took on the 27th February, 1975 when, in this Parliament of Guyana, we ratified two conventions. They are as follows:

Convention 100 – Equal Remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value; and

Convention 111 – Declaration in employment and occupation.

Under convention 100 it states: Equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. Could the hon. Minister tell us if any change is forseen in the near future? As far as I understand, the position that exists today, is that unskilled women doing equal work as unskilled men get a lower rate of pay. I think men get \$4 a day and women get \$3.60. This is discrimination against women. Could the Minister see that this is brought into line and that they get pay for equal work?

The other point is the old favourite. I do not wish to be facetious. This is in connection with the salaries of a husband and wife being taxed together. Putting the two together is discrimination against women. In order to remind the hon. Minister of his obligations, I will read very briefly from the I.L.O. Convention which was brought to this House because the hon. Minister of Labour has to give an Annual Report to the I.L.O. at the end of the year about how we are carrying out our duties. The Convention provided that:

“Each Member for which the Convention is in force shall undertake to:...

- (a) seek the co-operation of employers’ and workers organisations and other appropriate bodies in promotion the acceptance and observance of this policy;

- (b) enact such legislation and promote such educational programmes as may be calculated to secure the acceptance and observance of the policy;
- (c) repeal any statutory provisions and modify any administrative instructions for practice which are inconsistent with the policy”

Clauses (d) and (e) are not necessary at the moment but Clause (f) is important. It states:

“(f) indication in its annual reports on the application of the Convention the action taken in pursuance of the policy and the results secured by such action.”

This is just a reminder to the hon. Minister that he has to give an account of his stewardship.

With respect to subhead 19, Workers Education Unit, this is a new subhead. We would, therefore, like some information about this please.

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Cde. Carrington): Cde. Chairman, I must first thank the Member for bringing these questions to the House so that the Government would be able to not only let this Parliament know what we are doing in many of these areas, but the public as a whole. I will firstly deal with the question of securing the services of Economists in our man power division. As the hon. Member knows, there is a shortage of Economists the world over and though we have Economists in Guyana, they are employed in areas of priority where major consideration is given to their services. For this reason the Ministry of Labour has been able to get the services of good Economists to work in that division. Because of this, we are unable to put Investigators into the field. At the moment one of our officers is overseas doing studies.

On the question of the Campbell Report for Domestic, it is a fact that many reports are outstanding. The reason for this is that we have set up a number of Wages Councils but because of the work load in the Attorney General’s Office many of these reports have lapsed. Since we have established CASWIG, the Campbell Report is now referred to them and they will make

recommendations. As a matter of fact they have been meeting regularly over the past weeks and they will be making their report to the Ministry of Labour on the Campbell's Report.

On the question of discrimination, surely, you would agree that for 1975 if you look through the activities for International Women's year throughout the Caribbean you will find that Guyana comes out very well in recognising the place of women in society. When we passed the I.L.O. Conventions in this Parliament, the next step was to report to the I.L.O. on what has been done so far. We have reported to the I.L.O. that the Conventions were passed in Parliament. What we need to do next is to enact the necessary legislation in this respect.

We have gone further we have had a number of conferences and many of the women's Organisations have put up recommendations in many other areas. The women's Auxiliary of the People's National Congress has been pressuring all areas in Guyana to see that legislation is made in this respect.

We have had another conference since then, a conference of Caribbean Women and the outcome of these discussions of the women's Organisations that went to Mexico and to other parts of the Caribbean, including Cuba, is that a White Paper will be prepared on the Status of Women in Guyana covering all areas of legislation. So the Attorney General's Office is busy making ready this Paper for Parliament.

On the question of equalisation of pay for women, in the Public Service this is already done and in many private concerns we find that there is not equal pay for women and men. We are looking at the situation in the sugar industry where out-of-crop pay is not paid equally to men as it would be to women. Women are receiving less so it may be necessary for us to make legislation in this respect. The White Paper when it is out will clear this position once and for all in 1975 and perhaps it may be necessary to go in 1976 to make the necessary legislation.

Cde. Chairman, if I may explain further on the question of the Workers' Education Unit. In keeping with the People's National Congress Socialist ideological thrust, and the need for more economic development for production and productivity, it was necessary that we should train the workers in management so that they can take charge of the various concerns in the future. As you will remember, Cde. Chairman, it was in this Parliament that a Speech from the Throne gave a clear indication of Government's policy as regards the workers participation. It then therefore means that we will have to train workers in management, we will have to train the workers in workers participation and to train them in industrial relations.

So far for 1975 we have trained over 500 workers in workers participation, management and industrial relations. We intend in 1976 to do more training in this respect where we will have seminars, conferences, discussions and other programmes. For instance in the Ministry of Labour now, there are eight Trade Unionists who are attached to the Ministry of Labour and they are given a 6 months' course in the Ministry of Labour on industrial relations. They are attached there and they have to travel to other areas with the various concerns, the sugar estates, bauxite industry. They have to take part in discussions, conciliation, arbitration and this training is also extended to Personnel Officers in the various Corporations and Ministries. So you can see to what extent this programme of workers' education will cater for the year 1976. Thus it was necessary to have this vote of \$18,000.

Head 76, Ministry of Labour and Social Security - \$1,117,264 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 188.

**HEAD 77 – MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY
EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE SERVICE**

Question proposed that the sum of \$99,761 for Head 77, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Employment Exchange Service, stand part of the Estimates.

Mrs. DaSilva: Just a general comment to ask the hon. Minister to give some consideration to the Employment Exchange service. I am aware that his service exists but this is a suggestion I would like to throw out and ask the hon. Minister to give it some consideration. Is there any way in which the services of the Employment Exchange can be geared to take care of employers who want people on a temporary basis. For example, a firm may want an acting typist. A girl may be going on leave for two weeks, perhaps she is taking annual leave or she gets ill at short notice. I fully appreciate the mechanics of this and the difficulties that exist. It is difficult to send someone else at short notice especially when there is shortage of staff all the way round. Could the hon. Minister tell us anything about this?

Cde. Carrington: In respect of what the hon. Member asked just now, we do provide services and make placements for persons on a temporary basis, as is done in the Public Service. This is also done in private firms. It is a fact that we may not be able to get the persons immediately but we have a system of sending out messages by telegrams to persons who have registered at the Employment Exchange to report as early as possible. We use messengers to get these telegrams out to persons who want to employ people temporarily. This is the service we provide.

Head 77, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Employment Exchange - \$99,761 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 189.

HEAD 78 – MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Question proposed that the sum of \$5,414,646, for Head 78, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Social Assistance, Stand part of the Estimates.

Mrs. Dasilva: Page 189, subhead 1, items (4), (5) and (6), Social Assistance Officers,

3.10 p.m.

Child Welfare Officer and Social Welfare Officer (Rehabilitation). I take it if I did not speak on items (5) and (6) the Minister would be very disappointed. My question concerns Welfare Officers and the problem of staffing. We have been having this problem all the way through the Estimates. We have had explanations and all the rest of it, but each person or each Ministry has its own special problems. For item (4) we were asked to vote \$122,736, in 1975 and Revised Estimate is \$88,988. For 1976 the sum of \$125,521 is being requested. I know the problems we have but we want to be told how many vacancies there are for Social Assistance Officers. Are 28 persons employed? If not, have they got hopes of getting them during 1976? Are there letters saying: "Turn out to work on the 1st January, 1976? Going on to subhead 1, item (5), Child Welfare Officer. I hope that this person is now firmly entrenched in the post, because the sum of \$2,832 appears in the Revised Estimates Column for 1975 and it would appear that the person was engaged later in the year. I sincerely hope that it is not the other way round, that the person left early in the year and the post has been vacant for the rest of 1975.

Subhead 1, item (6) Social Welfare Officer (Rehabilitation): There are two officers and these are new offices created by supplementary Estimates 1975. Apparently, they could not get both because the sum of \$3,936 is shown in the Revised Estimate for 1975. I hope that there is an increase in staff for 1976.

We come to subhead 4, Grant to Salvation Army for Social work. This is an annual appeal to increase the assistance to these people. Cabinet has approved an increase, as I said under another head to the Red Cross Society, but these organisations, particularly one like the Salvation Army, are in a way supplementing the work that the Government ought to do. Even in the welfare countries they could do with more money. The sum of \$1,728 is hardly enough. This government seems to have problems with staffing and you have an organisation such as the Salvation Army. Surely they deserve an increase in their grant.

Subhead 5, Old Age Pensions: I know the Minister shares my sympathy for an increase in old age pensions. To live on \$15 a month in the urban areas and \$13 a month in the rural areas is absolutely impossible. But this Minister, like the Minister of Health, like the Minister of Education, cannot do the job unless he has the tools and in this instance the tool is money. I notice here that the Approved Estimate for 1975 was \$3,072,648. The revised Estimate shows that the whole amount will be used. I see here that we have been asked to vote \$3,500,000. The legend states: "Increased payment to recipients of Old Age Pensions". I should like to ask the hon. Minister if this means that at long last the money has been voted for him to carry out the Government's promise of bringing the people who receive \$13 a month, in line with those who live in the urban areas and thus pay them \$15 a month. Is this what that increase represents? When we read the legend you might get the impression that old age pensions had been increased. That is not correct. I think it really means that the rural people will now be brought in line with the urban, and I should like the Minister to let me know.

Sir, you know the Minister was not here yesterday and somebody correct me, I think it was the hon. Minister of Education, when I said how sad I was to find the sum of \$250,000 being requested for our school children to celebrate 100 years of primary education in the country. We do not want the children not to celebrate. We all have to learn and understand each other and we should have justice in our society. These young people can have the day off, they can have rallies, concerts, but each child can bring her own refreshments and save that \$250,000 which could be given to the old people. A few more could benefit. These children must be taught from

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an early age that they must also take part in the sacrifices that we are being asked to make in Guyana. This is what we would like to see done and we regret to see that it is not so.

Subhead 6, Public Assistance: The Approved Estimate for 1975 was \$1,326,000 which was fully used as the Revised Estimate shows. Now we are being asked to vote for 1976 \$1,500,000. The legend states "Increase in number of recipients". I do not know if these figures are to the nearest dollar but it appears to me that it is just going to be \$200,000 more for the people: **[Interruption]** The hon. Minister of Finance tells me that it is \$374,000. Is there any significant increase in the number of recipients who still have the means test? And again I plead

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for the abolition of the means test. It is all very well. You may come along and find somebody who has got \$30 or you may see an old couple who have their own little home with a garden. Fair enough but that is all they have. And they get their old age pension. Their circumstances were very hard but because they appear to have an income higher than is allowed by the means test they are not given public assistance. No matter how sympathetic the welfare officer is this rule is laid down and this has to be followed. So it is time for us to find some other yardstick of measuring whether a person should get social and public assistance.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Labour and Social Security.

Cde. Carrington: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. On the question of the Social Assistance Officers, subhead 1, item (4), it is a fact that there are vacancies in this Department mainly because with the revision of salaries many of these officers left this section of the Ministry and went to other Ministries mainly because of increased salaries. We are hoping that, with a new advertisement which is out for Social Assistance Officers, we will be able to get more persons applying and not only in a position not only to select but have them remain in the job for a much longer time. We are not receiving very many complaints because of the shortages since they are

supplemented, in some respect, by the Social Rehabilitation Officers who are now seen here in these Estimates.

Item (5), Child Welfare Officer: There is no need at the present moment for more than one because though she is designated Child Welfare Officer, it is not that there is just one woman or one person looking after child welfare in the Ministry of Labour or in the country as a whole. Her main responsibility is to look after adoptions. People wishing to have adoptions can approach the Adoption Board and she would make the necessary study of their family or the child and make the necessary arrangements for the Board to meet, to record minutes and such matters. She does not have to look into the welfare of children generally, but mainly looks into the question of adoption.

Now, item (6), Social Welfare Officers (Rehabilitation): As you will remember, Cde. Chairman, when the Palms came under the Ministry of Labour, the Social Welfare Officers were attached generally not only to the Palms but there were Social Welfare Officers moving to other institutions in Guyana and so they were covered in the Estimates under the Ministry of Health. We hope to make provision in these new Estimates to take over the services of those two officers who are now under the Ministry of Labour. They will do welfare work now generally. This is the reason for this apparently new item. Perhaps we can have another one serving in New Amsterdam, Berbice, or in the Corentyne.

On the question of subhead 7, Grants to Religious and Charitable Organisations, we have been doing our best, I must say, with the limited resources to assist all charitable organisations. We know, as a fact, that they need more assistance but we know, as a fact, that there are many Guyanese in society who can assist, who can make a direct contribution to these institutions. But, one of the things that we have noted over the past years is that those with the colonial mentality, I would say, who fall to recognise the need for self-reliance, depend upon the Government whose financial resources are limited to do everything. We feel that in various institutions, as we are

now setting up many of these homes for the aged, that the people in those institutions will make direct contributions to assist these organisation.

Just the same we are making our contributions in many ways. Outside of these direct grants, we give assistance otherwise by the upkeep of these homes and we have letters to this effect thanking the Ministry for assisting in repairs, for assisting in whatever they may need at the homes and so we think that we are doing our best in this respect. As Members would know, we have just agreed to give \$18,000 to Uncle Eddie's Home and we intend to erect many more such homes in Guyana, in Linden and in the Mazaruni area.

On the question of subhead 5, Old Age Pensions, the amount has been increased mainly to those persons in the rural areas and so there is an equalisation of payment: the sum of \$15 is paid in the city and in the rural areas. It will go into immediate effect as the money is passed.

On the question of subhead 6, Public Assistance, we are examining the question of the "Means Test" but our experience is that many people take advantage of Social Assistance and Pensions. There are some people who can very well do without a pension and so allow others to perhaps receive a greater pension or an increase in their pension. It is a fact that for some people the means test works against them and they do not get either social assistance or pensions but our Social Welfare Officers usually make an examination of the situation and we can provide assistance, as we did, under the heading of Social Rehabilitation. This system has been used effectively not only to assist the aged or persons who need further assistance but it also assists in rehabilitating many Guyanese who need rehabilitating. We will look at the means test but in the meanwhile we have situations where we can assist and the comrade on the other side – if she accepts the word "comrade" – can approach the Ministry of Labour in any such case where the means test works against the individual.

Head 78, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Social Assistance - \$5,414,646 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 190.

DIVISION XXXII, MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Question proposed that the sum of \$80,000 for Division XXXIII, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, stand part of the Estimates.

Mrs. DaSilva: Just a short question, Mr. Chairman. Subhead 1, Purchase of Equipment, \$80,000. The legend reads: "To provide for the purchase of two jeeps, 11 motor cycles and safety testing equipment." Just to ask the hon. Minister one question, for the safety testing equipment is needed obviously, I should imagine. In view of the fact that all Public Servants have their own transport where would these two jeeps and 11 motor cycles be used? In what part of the Ministry's work? What will they use it for?

3.30 p.m.

Cde. Carrington: Cde. Chairman, as you would know, the Ministry of Labour because of our rapid industrial development, will be called on to do more work in the industrial field not only to settle strikes but to get out to the various areas and try to satisfy the workers on the jobs. As you would know, as I suggested earlier, we are to have a productivity system which will deal with worker participation and provision is also made for productivity officers who will also visit in the factories and in the field to see that the system is working. Our Factory Inspectors will have to visit factories and the mines to see if conditions are safe and healthy. Therefore we must have three jeeps. There are times when they have to go to the mines and they cannot go there by a car. There are times when they have to go to the Estates in the rainy season and they cannot go there by car. But there are times when these officers have to travel alone and they will be using motor cycles.

It is our intention to increase the number of officers servicing the sugar estates. At the time of the last Estimates, we had less agricultural assessors and we intend to increase it to

eleven. This will put them in a position where there will be an officer on each Estate. As you will remember, we did amend the law to give them the right to looking into safety. These eleven officers would be stationed in the various estates to look into industrial relation matters generally and the health and welfare of the workers in the factory and in the field. To get into the backdams, like many of the other workers in the estates, they will have to use heavy duty motor cycles. That is the reason why we need this equipment, mainly for the transportation of officers which number we have increased.

There is one other point I would like to inform the hon. Member about. In connection with further assistance to the aged, we hope in 1976 to provide reduced travel fares on buses for the aged.

Mr. Singh: There is a supplementary question I would like to ask. The normal practice has been that in respect of officers who would use motor cycles, for example, the Marshals of the Supreme court, they would normally be given a loan to buy the motor cycles and it would be theirs. They would care it as their property and they would repay the loan but they would be granted a travelling allowance which would help them. This was the practice and I understand that the Government has found that it was much more desirable in the long run to have the officer own the vehicle. He takes more care of it and it is less maintenance involved. If we are buying motor cycles for eleven officers and it would be the Ministry's property, then there has been some increase in the cost of maintenance. I see that there has been some increase in the vote for transportation and travelling. I do not know whether this would take care of it. But I wonder why the shift from the general pattern where officers were allowed to own the vehicles. I can take the point about land rovers but I am talking about motor cycles which would be allocated to the particular officer in the particular district.

Cde. Carrington: I agree with the point raised by the hon. Member but we looked into this and we found that many of these officers have already acquired their own vehicles. We did

look into the question because I can see that there is some merit into what the hon. Member has said.

Division XXXII, Ministry of Labour and Social Security - \$80,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 5 – AUDIT

The Chairman: Page 25.

Question proposed that the sum of \$781,070 for Head 5, Audit, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: Page 25, Head 5 Audit. I looked into my copy of the 1975 Estimates and saw that the Question I had down to ask was asked last year. I am repeating it so that I can get a progress report from the hon. Minister. I said last year that the last Audit Report was in 1968. I asked whether there were any others presented to the Government since then, and if so, why have they not been presented to Parliament. There should be a time limit within which the Government, after presentation, should present these reports to Parliament.

Has the Accountant General presented the accounts for 1973 on or before the 30th April, 1975 as required by law? If this has not been done, how soon will it be done? The hon. Minister replied on the last occasion that the 1969 Audit Report was with the Ministry and the 1972 one would be completed in 1975. That is the note I have here. Could the hon. Minister tell us what is the position in respect of this department and could he tell us whether the 1974 accounts were presented by the 30th April, 1975, as required by the law, to the Director of Audit?

I should have mentioned that I wanted to speak generally, also on the question of vacancies. This department seems to have vacancies, though, not as many as last year. There

does appear to have been some improvement. I am wondering how significant an improvement there has been in respect of this department. For example, items (11) and (12), Assistant Auditor II and Assistant Auditor I respectively: In respect of item (11), the sum voted was \$134,676 and the revised amount was \$103,413, an underspending of approximately \$31,000 thereby suggesting vacancies among the thirty Assistant Auditors II. Similarly, in the case of the Assistant Auditor I, there has been underspending to the extent of approximately \$31,000. Does the hon. Minister know what vacancies exist and what plans there are to fill these vacancies? I am particularly requesting the Public Service Commission to speedily make the appointment and fill the vacancies. There seems to be, from what I have heard in respect of other Ministries, some delay in respect of the Public Service Ministry working with the Public Service Commission in filling the vacancies and in general coordinating the filling of vacancies among the various departments so that when one officer is promoted and transferred to another department another officer is promptly sent to replace him, so that the work can continue. There seems to have been some problem generally in respect of this. One officer is promoted but nobody is sent to take his place to carry on the work. I wonder whether the hon. Minister knows what the position is and what is being done to remedy it.

3.40 p.m.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance (Cde. Hope): With respect to the audit reports those for 1969 and 1970 have been presented to the Government and those reports will be laid in Parliament at a very early date. The other Reports up to 1974 are in varying stages of preparation. But what has been done as a matter of progress during the current year is that we have in fact had the data processing equipment restructured and expanded so as to provide more speed and capacity for accelerating the processing of the relevant documents on which the preparation of the accounts depend.

The presentation of these reports, I admit, Cde. Chairman, is not really the most satisfactory. There have been all sorts of reasons why the reports have not been presented on time. Some of them relate to the shortage of accounting staff with adequate experience to deal at all levels with documents so as to present accurate accounting. But the matter is being constantly looked at. We are devising various means by which we can expedite the production of these Reports and I hope that next year on the next occasion when the hon. Leader of the Opposition raises this question I shall be able to give him a more promising account as to where we stand with these Reports.

With respect to vacancies, as the hon. Member did observe there have been vacancies but throughout the year a great deal of effort has been made to fill these vacancies with the result that some of them have been filled. In other cases the appointments have been made and the people have to be released from their respective Ministries from which they will have to come to fill these Posts. In other cases interviews are in the course of being conducted. The important thing, however, is that the question of filling these vacancies is actively being pursued.

Head 5, Audit - \$781,070 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 30.

DIVISION IV – OTHER SERVICES NOT UNDER MINISTERIAL CONTROL

Question proposed that the sum of \$30,000 for Division IV, Other Services not under Ministerial Control, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: This comes immediately after Public Prosecutions and I rather erroneously thought that it had something to do with Public Prosecutions but obviously it does not. This leaves me with the question which Department, Ministry, Government Agency has it got to do with. The sum of \$30,000 is requested to provide for the purchase of vehicles and miscellaneous

equipment. I am not sure that \$30,000 can buy very many vehicles but we would like to know what vehicles and miscellaneous equipment are going to be bought and for whom.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Finance.

Cde. Hope: Actually, Cde. Chairman, the amount which relates to the provisions for the Director of Audit, really covers the purchase of a few vehicles mainly station wagons and office equipment facilitate the work of auditing the report and to get those Reports out as early as possible.

Division IV, Other Services not Under Ministerial Control - \$30,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 193.

HEAD 80 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Question proposed that the sum of \$669,044 for Head 80, Ministry of Finance, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: I would like to make a general remark in respect of the Ministry of Finance. From time to time I have criticised the figures in these Estimates. I have criticised the Estimates but in fairness I would like to make it known to this honourable House and indeed to the Nation – and I speak not only as a member of the Opposition but as a former civil servant - that I do appreciate the industry, the hard work, the dedication of the Minister and the officers in his Ministry. I appreciate the difficulties also. It is no mean task to produce a book of this size; it is no mean task to be involved in an operation like this. Figures are fed to them by the various Ministries and they have to be examined critically; they have to be correlated; they have to be put together to form one cohesive whole. It is, to my mind, a tremendous job. It is a tremendous

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lot of work involved to do this and also to keep monetary expenditure generally during the whole year. This must necessarily cause them to put in a lot of extra work. I may criticise, I think constructively, but I do appreciate the hard work and dedication involved.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Finance, I am sure you would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Cde. Hope: Certainly, Cde. Chairman. I would like to express our appreciation for the very kind words just spoken by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. We really do appreciate them.

Head 80, Ministry of Finance - \$699,044 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 194 and 195.

3.50 p.m.

HEAD 81 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ACCOUNTANT GENERAL

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,557,662 for Head 81, Ministry of Finance, Accountant General, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: A short general question and then I should like to speak on subhead 2 on page 194 and subhead 27 on page 195. This is a small matter, but a big one for the individuals concerned. Last year I raised the question of an increase in salary for the Judges' chauffeurs. I am happy to say that during this year, some time ago, the salaries were increased and they were increased retroactively but unfortunately the back pay due to these chauffeurs has not been forthcoming and there seems to be a shifting of blame between the Registry and the Accountant General's Office. They have not received their back pay and they have complained to me. At least let them have this money for Christmas. They are small men and they have been waiting for a long time.

In respect of subhead 2, Transport and Travelling, the sum of \$14,000 was approved in the 1975 Estimates. The sum of \$14,000 is shown as the revised estimate, but a request is now being made for \$30,000 instead of \$14,000 for 1976 and the legend states: "To provide for inspection of Accounts in Foreign Embassies." Could the hon. Minister tell us what is involved here? Will we be sending officers stationed here in Guyana to check on the accounts in the overseas missions? What really is the system? What is involved generally in this? There is a substantial increase in the funds, and I am not sure whether officers here will go overseas to look at the systems and check on the documents. If so, then the obvious question following on that would be "what about the Director of Audit? How would he be involved in this? Would he be going or his officers? Or is it the Accountant General's officers going? Or is it both sets of officers going? We would like to know what the system is and what is envisaged in this case.

Cde. Hope: With regard to the payment of the Judges' chauffeurs, I myself knew nothing of this problem and it seems that the officials in the Ministry knew nothing about it also. The hon. Leader of the Opposition having raised the issue now we would certainly see how much merit there is in it.

With regard to subhead 2, the explanation given here says that the expenses involved to meet the cost of having officers from the Accountant General's Office visit foreign embassies to see that the relevant rules and instructions are being properly carried out. With respect to the Director of Audit, it is also true that the Director of Audit from time to time makes periodic visits and the relevant officers in both offices, the office of the Accountant General as well as that of the Director of Audit visit these Embassies from time to time. I understand that the visits are no more than two in any one year.

Mr. Singh: I had indicated that I would have talked on the other page and I am sorry about this. Subhead 27, Training of Accountants. We do know that accountants are very much in short supply and there is an item which states "Training of Accountants". The sum of \$1,200 is shown in the Approved Estimate for 1975, the amount remains \$1,200 in the Revised Estimate

Column. It is not a lot of money, but could the hon. Minister tell us something about this scheme? This is a very important field, we do have a serious shortage of accountants and any scheme for the training of accountants is very laudable. Could the hon. Minister give us some idea of how it is going?

Cde. Hope: Cde. Chairman, you would recall that a moment ago I said that because of the lack of trained and experienced staff at the accounting level in order to solve some of these problems we are having a number of accountants trained in Government accounting. I understand that at the moment there are about 20 accountants in training. They will train for about six months. Training takes place at the Government Technical Institute. There is a small provision to cover the cost of books.

Head 81, Ministry of Finance, Accountant General - \$2,557,662 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 196.

HEAD 82 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,837,036 for Head 82, Ministry of Finance, Customs and Excise, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: Just a short question on page 197, subhead 11, Refunds of Revenue. There have been complaints. I notice that there was a provision of \$500,000 last year in the approved Estimates. The revised estimate sent it up to \$575,000, that is, an increase of \$75,000 more. Is the hon. Minister of the opinion that the sum of \$500,000 for 1976 will be adequate? Is it not likely that it would be more in the nature of 1975 expenditure and more?

Cde. Hope: Cde. Chairman, I believe that this is an adequate amount to start with. The refunds as I explained earlier at another meeting of this House refer really to cases where a person presents inadequate documents and consequently have to make a deposit. When adequate documents have been provided the money is refunded, if a refund is necessary, or the duty is collected, if the duty is collectible. One can never accurately forecast this, but we think that \$500,000 is a fair estimate, as was pointed out.

Head 82, Ministry of Finance, Customs and Excise - \$2,873,036 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Chairman: Pages 198 and 199.

Question proposed that the sum of \$3,929,361 for head 83, Ministry of Finance, Inland Revenue, stand part of the Estimates.

4 p.m.

Mr. Singh: Sir, I am sorry to refer to vacancies again but I think this need to be emphasised so that it can be looked at next year. I shall deal with subheads 8, 10, and 13 on page 199.

From the underspendings in this Department there must be a number of vacancies. For example, there seems to be vacancies in item (4), Senior Inspector of Taxes, item (6), Inspector and Assistant Inspector of Taxes, item (8), Chief Accountant, item (10), Toll Supervisor, item (14), Statistical Officer and item (15), Assistant Accountants. Item (17), Senior Clerk (General) seems to be one where there could be some improvement. There should be 7 Senior Clerks (General) and the sum of \$30,773 was approved in the 1975 Estimates but only \$13,742 was spent and the legend clearly states: "Offices vacant." So, there are, by the admission of the Department itself, vacancies in this Department and a look at the figures will show that there must be several vacancies.

For item (25), Senior Revenue Investigator, only \$1,500 is to be spent; for item (27), Revenue Collectors \$4,500 is to be spent. Item (28), Filing Room Attendant. I would have thought that filing was very, very important. The sum of \$3,000 was requested in 1975 but that has been revised to \$1,500. There is no need to go into all but I must recognise that there are vacancies and, as I said, this may account for some of the complaints levelled against the Department in the past. I wonder whether the hon. Minister will tell us what is being done in respect of filling these vacancies. I am sure the Heads of the Department will like to have adequate staff in order to get the work done and I suppose in the final analysis the Head of Department and the Minister have to take the blame so something should be done. We know that the Ministry is training accountants. Let us hope that this does help to relieve the situation.

In respect of page 199, subhead 8, Refunds of Revenue, this is again an area in which there have been a lot of complaints and perhaps justifiably so, when we look at the figures. For example, in the 1975 Approved Estimates, the sum of \$2 million was approved and that had to be revised to \$3,500,000; \$1,500,000 more. I remember talking on this before and I remember the opinion being given that the sum of \$2 million would be adequate for 1975. I expressed doubts about it and obviously I was correct because the figure had to be revised to \$3,500,000, a million and a half more. For 1976, we have gone back to the 1975 approved level of \$2 million. Again I ask: is the hon. Minister satisfied or will we have to revise that figure again in 1976 by another million dollars? In view of the outstanding refunds, one would have thought that the projection would have been made for more. I am therefore wondering whether it would not have been more realistic to put the anticipated expenditure in 1976 at the same level as 1975 revised and that is \$3½ million instead of \$2 million.

Subhead 10, Expenses of Board of Review. I spoke on this in my Budget Speech. The hon. Minister was here. I do not think I need to repeat what I said in my Budget Speech. [**Cde. Hope:** "When did you make a Budget Speech?"] In my contribution to the Budget Debate. I am glad that it was the hon. Minister who gave the Budget Speech and not I. I refer to the statement I presented. If I may repeat what I said then, as there seems to be an indication on the part of the hon. Minister that I should repeat it, I said that in his 1975 Budget Speech the hon. Minister had

promised to look at the Board of Review to extend it and do something about it. He definitely said that in his Budget Speech and my information is that nothing has been done in that respect. May I put it this way: I am sure that the Inland Revenue Department itself must be dissatisfied with the operation of the Board of Review. There is a tremendous backlog in respect of matters before the Board. The Minister recognised this in his 1975 Budget Speech. It was not repeated in his 1976 Budget Speech but I would like things to be brought up to date on what he has done since 1975 Budget Speech.

In my budget contribution, I did suggest that perhaps the legislation should be amended so that several Boards of Review may be set up with their own Chairman. At the present moment, the legislation is such that there is only one Chairman of one Board. I suggested that we could have several Boards of Review and several Chairmen who can meet at the same time and that we can make them permanent Boards of Review not merely giving the Chairman \$30 a day for attendance but paying salaries to all members of the Board of Review. I think this would be more expeditious for, after all, the Board of Review was set up to help to get rid of these objections one way or the other.

Once a matter of an allowance has been rejected by the Commissioner of Inland Revenue and it goes to appeal and the person continues claiming that allowance year after year, all those subsequent returns made by the person would have to be re-adjusted when the matter is decided. Whereas, if the matter had been dealt with expeditiously, there would not be that need to re-adjusted if the matter is disallowed. If it is heard expeditiously and a decision is given, then the person would know in future that in all his assessments he cannot claim that allowance because there has been a re-thinking on it. But, we have this repetition of the claim going on and on in the hope that the Board of Review would someday decide on it. There is this ancillary problem of continuing claims which may be naturally thrown out by a decision of the Board of Review. I think this makes the situation really very awkward and, indeed, I would appeal that something should be done very, very quickly about that.

In respect of subhead 13, Cinema tickets, I note that \$12,000 appears in the Approved Estimates column but nothing has been set down in the Revised Estimates.

4.10 p.m.

There seems to have been no expenditure under this subhead. If there has been no expenditure then tickets were not printed as anticipated. Is this going to be done in 1976? The hon. Minister is asking for \$12,000 in 1976.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Mr. Hope: Cde. Chairman, the departments of the Ministry of Finance, like many other Ministries, suffer from difficulties of inadequate staff, but I think it needs to be pointed out that the public sector has been expanding very rapidly. Not only has there been the shortage of staff to service the recurrent budget, there is also the need to service a growing Capital Budget. What has really been happening is that this expansion has been taking place more rapidly than it has been possible to recruit people in all areas. In other words this expansion has taken place more rapidly than the growth in the number of people to service all the positions, particularly in view of the need for qualified, experienced persons in certain technical, professional and administrative fields. Here, you need people with experience to do the work adequately.

We have found that whilst certain areas expand and needed to be provided for, it could have meant that other Ministries could have given up positions. Indeed some of the positions have been kept deliberately vacant, because it is considered that as a service expands it does not necessarily mean that we have to recruit more people. There needs to be a re-deployment of staff from one area to the other. So we would encounter vacancies here or there. But in a number of other areas we have increased the number of positions and have filled those positions. This is part of the general restructuring in response to the development needs of the public sector. Where

the vacancies are to be filled, I am told and advised that the appropriate measures are being taken to ensure that the right people are put in the right positions.

With regard to the larger amount required for Refunds of Revenue it would be recalled that during the course of this year, as well as the latter part of last year, the Commissioner of Inland Revenue was taking a very active position in terms of encouraging people to submit their income tax returns on the basis of which an assessment could be made. This assessment is the only basis for a refund of taxes collected. It is because the response to the Commissioner's initiative has been very good, that it has been possible to receive more returns, and to assess them. Therefore, refunds of revenue naturally increased. This is going to be a recurrent situation.

With regard to the Board of Review, I did say in my Budget Speech of 1974 that the Government proposes to set up a Board of Review in three divisions. In fact, there would be three Boards of Review established and sitting simultaneously. That promise is being kept. The law has been drafted and I believe it is not almost ready for publication and presentation to this House. So we have been doing a lot of work. As a matter of fact, the building in which this expanded Board of Review is to sit has been acquired already, so that all arrangements are going ahead for ensuring that the system works as was projected in that Budget Speech.

With regard to the selling of tickets, the situation is a little bit more foggy. The facts are that some tickets have been purchased. There have been some problems. Some tickets have been inadequate in terms of printing and we could not use them. But we still hope that this means of administering the entry to cinemas will be pursued. That is why we provide \$12,000 again to ensure the printing of these tickets.

Head 83, Ministry of Finance, Inland Revenue - \$3,929,361 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Perhaps this is a convenient time to take the suspension.

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National Assembly

4.10 - 4.20 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

The Chairman: The Sitting of the House is now suspended.

Suspended accordingly at 4.20 p.m.

5.12.75

National Assembly

4.40 - 4.50 p.m.

On Resumption

4.40 p.m.

The Chairman: Page 200.

**HEAD 84 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE
PENSIONS AND GRATUITIES**

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,401,931 for Head 84, Ministry of Finance, Pension and Gratuities, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 84, Ministry of Finance, Pensions and Gratuities - \$2,401,931 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 201 to 212.

**HEAD 85 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE
PUBLIC DEBT**

Question proposed that the sum of \$486,999 for Head 85, Ministry of Finance, Public Debt, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 85, Ministry of Finance, Public Debt - \$486,999 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 213.

HEAD 86 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE
REVISION OF WAGES, SALARIES AND RELATED PAYMENTS

Question proposed that the sum of \$20,100 for Head 86, Ministry of Finance, Revision of Wages, Salaries and Related Payments, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 86, Ministry of Finance, Revision of Wages, Salaries and Related Payments - \$20,100 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 214.

HEAD 87 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE
POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK

Question proposed that the sum of \$7 for Head 87, Ministry of Finance, Post Office Savings Bank, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 87, Ministry of Finance, Post Office Savings Bank - \$7 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 215

DIVISION XXXIV – MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Question proposed that the sum of \$8,900,000 for Division XXXIV, Ministry of Finance, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: I would like to speak on subhead 6 and subhead 11. Subhead 6 deals with Capital contribution to the Guyana Co-operative Insurance Service. The legend says “To provide

for the establishment of an Insurance Service. We would request that the hon. Minister give us some details in respect of this Insurance Service. We have read in the newspapers that the Head of one of the existing Banks Mr. Field-Ridley and another former Insurance Company Head, Mr. Rajendra I think it is, are actually on the job. Could the hon. Minister tell us what the schedule is for setting up and actually going into operation? Is it the intention of the Government to take over the Insurance businesses which would cause the existing Insurance Companies to have to go out of operation?

In respect of subhead 11, Buildings, the sum of \$100,000 is requested and the legend says "To provide for the construction of buildings." I would like to ask the hon. Minister what buildings these are and where would they be located?

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Finance.

Cde. Hope: Cde. Chairman, since 1972, I believe, I projected the establishment of three Finance Institutions which together with the Guyana National Co-operative Bank, would a complex of four financial institutions covering Commercial Banks, Development Banks and an Insurance Corporation. We have succeeded so far in setting up the two development Banks and we are now in the process of setting up the third institution which is an insurance Corporation. This Corporation, whatever the final name given to it, would, in fact, do all kinds of insurance business. There will be a section or division dealing with life insurance and there will also be another division dealing with general insurance. General insurance will cover insurance of property and similar risks.

This Insurance Corporation would also be operating as a reinsurer in both life and general insurances. So, Cde. Chairman, we would have in this country an organisation large enough to take a portion of the re-insurance business that normally would have gone abroad as a necessity. In this way the insurance company would be performing the very important task of ensuring that our resources can remain within the country.

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(Cde. Hope continued)

National Assembly

4.50 - 5 p.m.

This Service or Corporation is to be established, I hope, very early in the new year. The law pertaining to the two development Banks, as well as to that institution, the establishment of

4.50 p.m.

which I also projected in 1972, is being drafted. What we contemplate is a financial administration which will take care of the general coordination of the four individual institutions that form this complex of financial institutions. I expect very early in the new year, perhaps February – I cannot be precise – to be able to bring the legislation to this House which would provide the Charter not only for the two Development Banks but also for the insurance service. When that happens we will then be in a position to proceed with the actual launching of the insurance service. In the meantime we are proceeding to have all the necessary preliminary work done. Because of this, we have identified a General Manager, and we propose to have an individual manager below him to be in charge of the two basic sectors of insurance business in which the service would be involved.

We have been fortunate today to be able, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition pointed out, to secure the services of what I regard as a very experienced person as head of the general insurance section and we are in fact looking for somebody of adequate experience to take charge of the life section. The funds which we seek in these estimates are to provide initial capital for the new institution.

With regard to building we do propose to take and develop the site of the old Chronicle building in Main Street. That site will be the location of, I hope, a very important structure with adequate space to house all four banks, first a branch of the G.N.C.B. perhaps the main branch of G.N.C.B., as well as the Head Office of the Agriculture Development Bank, the Mortgage Finance Bank, as well as the Insurance Corporation. In addition to that, the building will house whatever staff will be attached to the Financial Administration which will be an umbrella for co-

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4.50 - 5 p.m.

ordinating the activities of the four institutions. The sum is very small, it is really to do with preliminary work.

Division XXXIV, Ministry of Finance - \$8,900,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Comrades and hon. Members, this completes consideration in Committee of Supply of the Heads and Divisions of the 1976 Estimates of Expenditure. Let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Finance.

Cde. Hope: Cde. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply considered and approved of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1976. I now ask that the Question be put.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 12

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop):
Cde. Speaker, as you are aware, under the Standing Orders the time for the introduction of Bills is passed but we desire to conclude the consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure and formalising that by way of introduction of the Appropriation Bill. I therefore ask, with respect, your leave that Standing Order No.12 be suspended to enable the Minister of Finance to introduce the Appropriation Bill, 1975.

The Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Cde. Ramsaroop: I formally ask that Standing Order No.12 be suspended.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Finance.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS –FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Appropriation Bill, 1976 (Bill No. 33/1975) [**The Minister of Finance**]

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Finance.

BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS APPROPRIATION BILL, 1975

Cde. Hope: In accordance with article 80(2) of the Constitution of Guyana, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the following Bill for consideration by the National Assembly:

A Bill intituled an Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sum necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the financial year ending 31st December, 1976, Estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of that sum for specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.

I now move the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill 1975.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill read the Third time and passed as printed.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Finance.

MOTION

GUARANTEE TO CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK FOR LOAN TO LIAT

“Whereas Leeward Islands Air Transport Limited 1974 (Otherwise known as Liat (1974) is a company incorporated in Antigua, the shareholders being the Governments of the territories of the Caribbean Community, with Guyana holding 5% of the equity in the share capital;

And whereas Liat (1974) requires monies to repay the sum of Five million, five hundred and nine thousand, six hundred and forty United States dollars (\$5,509,640 (U.S.)) to the Industrial Bank of Venezuela, representing the proceeds of a loan made by the Bank to Liat (1974);

And whereas the Caribbean Development Bank is willing to make available the said sum of Five million, five hundred and nine thousand, six hundred and forty United States dollars (\$5,509,640 (U.S.)) to Liat (1974) as a loan by way of repayment of that sum to the Industrial Bank of Venezuela on a guarantee being given by Guyana and the other shareholders of Liat (1974) to the extent of their respective equity holdings in Liat (1974);

And whereas the Caribbean Development Bank and Liat (1974) are a lending agency and a regional institution, respectively, within the meaning of the State Enterprises (Guarantee) Act 1974.

Be it resolved that this National Assembly authorises the Minister of Finance or such other person duly authorised by him, acting on behalf of the

Government of Guyana, to give for the aforesaid purpose in accordance with the State Enterprises (Guarantee) Act 1974 a guarantee to the Caribbean Development Bank in the sum of one hundred and ninety-two thousand, eight hundred and thirty seven United States dollars (\$192,837 (U.S.)) being the equivalent value of the equity held by Guyana in Liat (1974).”

Cde. Hope: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name. The Motion really seeks to secure the authority of this House to guarantee certain sums of money which LIAT 1975 is proposing to borrow from the Caribbean Development Bank. The story of LIAT I think is well known. The Associated States have found it necessary to take the lead in organising a new company – LIAT 1975 – to take the place of the former LIAT Airline which failed consequent on the bankruptcy of the Court Lines which owned LIAT. The Associated States have done this to ensure that they continue to enjoy the services of an airline linking them to the rest of the Caribbean and the world.

5 p.m.

That Company did borrow, when it was being set up, a sum of approximately \$5,509,640 from a Venezuelan Industrial Bank. This had to be done because the money had to be raised at very short notice. The opportunity has been taken to re-organise the Company and to determine the part it has to play and how it will play that part in the Caribbean. The borrowing from the Venezuelan Industrial Bank was, I am told, on a very short term and therefore now has to be repaid.

The Caribbean Development Bank, as part of its responsibility within the Caribbean, is proposing to lend a sum of money to LIAT 1974 so that it can pay the Industrial Bank of Venezuela. In order to do that however the Charter of the Bank requires that such a loan be guaranteed by the appropriate Governments. It is, in these circumstances therefore, that we are seeking the authority of this House to enter into a guarantee together with the other countries of CARICOM to secure this loan which the Caribbean Development Bank proposes to lend to LIAT. I therefore formally move the Motion.

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5 – 5.10 p.m.

Mr. Singh: We support the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved: “That this National Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.”

[The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]

Adjourned accordingly
